

FAMOUS ENGLISH POETS

By HAMILTON W. MABIE, *Author and Critic.*



JOHN KEATS

THE MENTOR

SERIAL No. 44

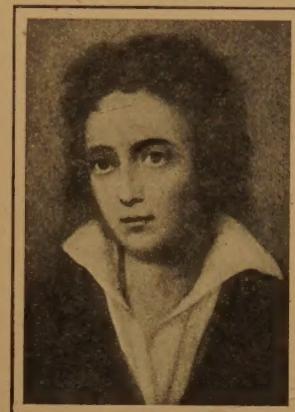


DEPARTMENT OF
LITERATURE



MENTOR GRAVURES

BYRON	WORDSWORTH
SHELLEY	TENNYSON
KEATS	BROWNING



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

MODERN English poetry is rich not only in its quality, but in its variety, both of theme and of manner. The exuberant imagination and splendid profusion of Swinburne are in striking contrast with the restraint and clearness of style of Matthew Arnold; the fluency and narrative faculty of William Morris, with the strongly etched and powerfully phrased work of Francis Thompson and Henley. The classical dignity of Landor, the humor of Hood, the seriousness of mood of Clough (kluff), the pictorial genius of Rossetti, the fresh invention of Stevenson and Kipling, suggest the range of poetic production of an age not matched in wealth of genius since the age of Shakespeare. Among the throng of poets who made lasting contributions to English literature during the nineteenth century, six may be regarded as most representative.

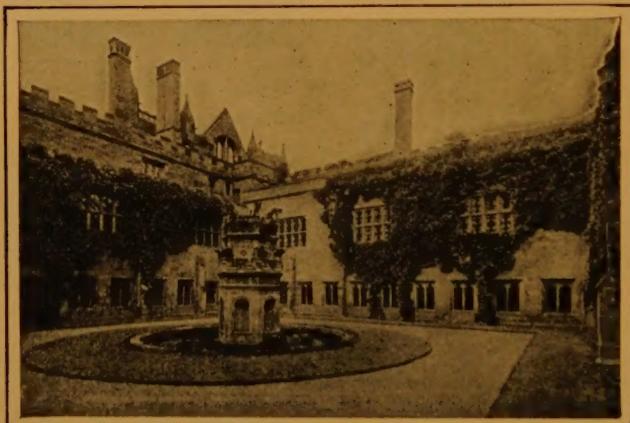
Byron died ninety-one years ago; but, although there has been a great change in the way poets look at life and in their way of writing verse, he holds his place as one of the greater poets, not only in reputation, but in popular regard; and for two reasons,—he was one of the born singers to whom men will always stop to listen, and he was also a poet of revolt. He is not read in this country as Browning and Kipling are read; nor, on the other hand, is he neglected as Milton and Landor are neglected. His stormy nature and his tempestuous career add an element of personal interest to the claims of his poetry upon the attention of reading people today, and he is one of those men of genius about whom it is difficult to be judicial: those who like his work become his partizans, those who dislike him charge him with insincerity and immorality.

It must be frankly confessed that Byron had moments of insincerity, and that he often posed; but he was largely the victim of his temperament. Mr. Symonds has said of him that he was well born and ill bred.

He had noble impulses, and he had the strong passions that give energy of feeling and vitality of imagination to many of the greatest men and women; but he had neither clearness of moral vision nor steadiness of purpose. He had great genius; but he was neither intellectually nor morally great. And yet he had such force of mind and eloquence that Goethe, (gay'-te) who was the greatest critic of his time, if not of all time, declared that the English could show no poet to be compared with him.

BYRON'S PLACE AMONG POETS

What ground was there for an estimate which gave Byron a place by himself among English poets? "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" was a telling satire written by a confident boy of genius, effective in "hits" which the time understood, but defective in critical insight; "Childe Harold," the early stanzas of which appeared after travel had inspired him, was a splendid piece of rhetoric which often attains a very noble eloquence. "The Giaour" (jow'-er), "Manfred," the "Corsair," "Lara" (lah'-rah), stirred an age which was in revolt against rigid and often artificial conventions. "Don Juan" (hoo-ahn'), like "Childe Harold," is a poetic jour-



NEWSTEAD ABBEY
Byron's Home.



BYRON'S MOTHER

From the painting by Thomas Stewardson in possession of John Murray.

nal which lacks dramatic unity, but contains descriptions of compelling beauty. Some of the shorter pieces, like the "Prisoner of Chillon," "When We Two Parted," "She Walks in Beauty," have the power of deep feeling when it becomes eloquent; while such stanzas as "The Isles of Greece," scattered through "Childe Harold," make history as moving as poetry.

Byron had richness of imagination rather than wealth of thought; he had a full-throated, operatic voice rather than purity of tone; he had splendor rather than clarity of mind; he had great natural force

of genius rather than command of the resources of art. He was generous in impulse, enthusiastic in temper, and he loved liberty. It was the presence of these qualities in his nature, and his spirit of revolt, that led Mazzini (maght-see'-nee), to predict, "The day will come when Democracy will remember all that it owes to Byron."

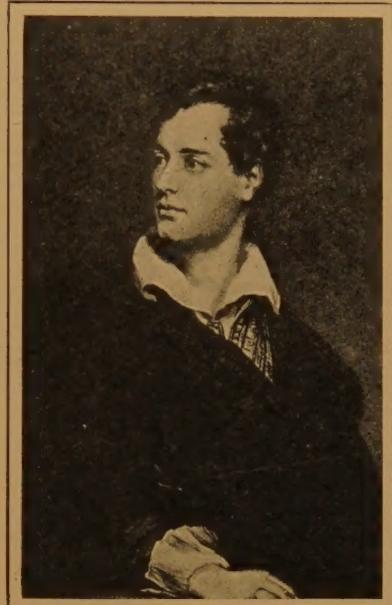
SHELLEY

Shelley, too, was a lover of freedom; but of a freedom that was the breath of the soul rather than social or political liberty. He lacked humor, he bore no yoke in his youth, his father was a matter-of-fact and eccentric tyrant, and the boy of genius lost his way in a world which nobody helped him to understand. When one reads the story of his brief and confused career, of the shabby and immoral things he did, it must be remembered that he discovered how to fly, but nobody taught him how to walk. He was always a splendid, wayward child, to whom visions were more real than facts. He died at thirty, and his life was only a beginning.

But what a splendid prelude it was! "Alastor," the "Stanzas Written in Dejection," the "Ode to the West Wind," "The Cloud," the immortal lines "To a Skylark," are flights of poetry which reflect the splendor of the sky under which they seem to move as if impelled by wings. "Prometheus Unbound," "The Revolt of Islam," and other long poems show his hatred of tyranny, whether human or divine, his ardent passion for humanity. He was only at times a great artist: his verse often lacks substance and reality, and has the beauty and remoteness of cloud pictures. His critical faculty was obscured by the spontaneity and facility of his creative moods; but he had the power of growth. His best work was at the end of his career, and he died at the moment the signs of maturity were showing themselves. He had no creed save that of resistance to tyranny, and he defined nothing; but he had noble visions, a beautiful voice, a splendid faith. With all the faults of his youth, and



LADY BYRON
The wife of the poet.



LORD BYRON
From the engraving by Lupton after the painting by Thomas Phillips.



SHELLEY'S BIRTH-PLACE

Here the poet was born
August 4, 1792.



SHELLEY AS A CHILD

From a copy by Reginald Easton of the Duc de Montpensier's miniature of Shelley, in the Bodleian Library.



THE SHELLEY MEMORIAL
Designed by E. Onslow Ford.

they were of tragic seriousness, there was something angelic about him, and he made life richer and more splendid.

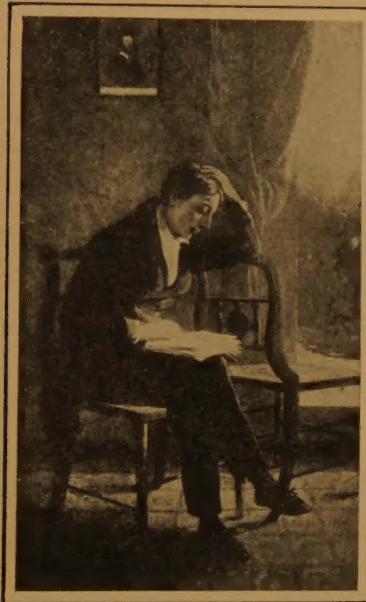
KEATS' LOVE OF BEAUTY

The poets of the first quarter of the last century died young: Byron at thirty-six, Shelley at thirty, Keats at twenty-six. What Byron's future would have been no one will venture to predict; but Shelley and Keats were rapidly gaining in power when the

end came. The first was the fiery leader of revolt, the second was the idealist, concerned, not with present oppressive traditions, but with untrammeled freedom of thought and of life.

Keats cared for none of these things: he was in love with beauty. One must go back to Spenser to find an Englishman of his sensitiveness to beauty, and he was much simpler than Spenser, whose moral idealism expressed itself in a refined symbolism. Keats was the son of a stable keeper, went to school for a few years, and was conspicuous chiefly for his pugnacious disposition. The impression that he was a weak, sentimental boy and man is without foundation. He became the victim of a heart-breaking disease; but his was essentially a brave and manly nature.

His later work is notable not only for its beauty, but for its solidity of texture. He became an apprentice to a surgeon. Through his acquaintance with a family of cultivated people he became a reader of good books, and discovered his vocation when he opened the "Faerie Queene." That poem did not make him a poet: it opened his eyes to the fact that he was



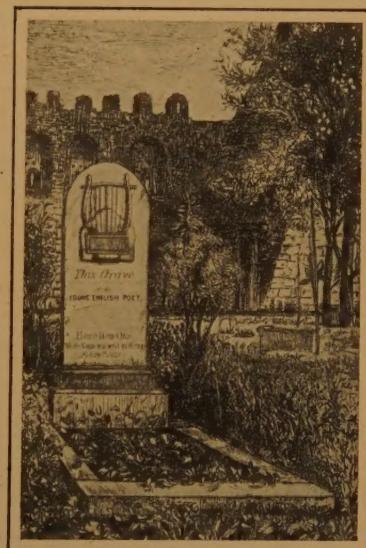
KEATS AT HOME

all things." He not only loved it, but gave it illustration in short poems of unsurpassed perfection. "The Eve of St. Agnes," the "Ode to a Nightingale," the "Ode to Autumn," the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," have a deathless loveliness and are stamped by that finality of shape which marks the best pieces of Greek sculpture. Matthew Arnold said of these shorter poems that they had "that rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master."

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

While these poets died before maturity, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning had ample time in which to harvest all the fruits of their genius. Wordsworth's life was in striking contrast to the lives of his brilliant contemporaries. Born before them, he lived twenty-seven years after the oldest of them died. Byron was an extensive traveler, Shelley lived five years in Italy, and Keats' last months were spent in

a poet. "Endymion," published when he was twenty-three years old, was immature in construction and diction; but it was the first bloom of a beautiful genius. "Hyperion," which came near the end, is a fragment, for he was still very young in knowledge of life and the practice of art; but it has nobility and a certain largeness of handling that predict strength as well as art. The first line of "Endymion" showed where he stood as a poet, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," and on his deathbed he said, "I have loved the principle of beauty in



THE GRAVE OF KEATS

Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery. His last request was that on his tombstone there be carved, "Here lies one whose name was written in water."



THE LIFE MASK OF KEATS

Attributed to Haydon by the artist Joseph Severn. From a cast made in New York, presumably from a cast of the original. An electrotype of the mask is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

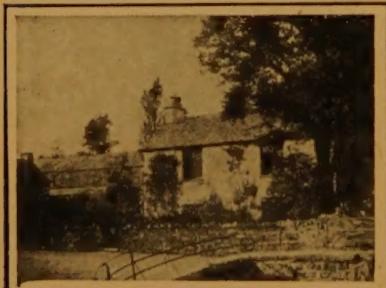
the same country. Byron died in Greece, Shelley was drowned in the Gulf of Spezia (spet'-see-eh), and Keats came to the end of his sufferings in the little room that looks out on the Spanish steps which are gay with flowers in the Roman spring.

With the exception of a brief residence in France and Germany, Wordsworth spent eighty years on English soil, and mainly in the Lake Country. He was born in the North, went to school in a little village near Lake Windermere, and spent his life at Grasmere and at Rydal Mount only three or four miles distant. His life was free from struggles, either mental or material, and was one of meditation and quiet growth. In contrast with Byron, he was a poet of reflection; unlike Shelley, he saw Nature as the intimate companion of the spirit; and he sought beauty in the simplicity of obscure lives and daily experience rather than in the richness of imagination

or in that fairy land of mythology which laid its spell on Keats. He was deeply religious, and saw Nature as a revelation of the divine mind; a visible and material creation, penetrated and filled by the divine spirit. His years of inspiration were few; but his conscientious industry was untiring. In his creative moods he wrote some of the noblest and most perfect poetry in English; in his moods of faithful industry he wrote much thoughtful but unpoetic verse. In the latter class fall his long poems; in the



WORDSWORTH'S BIRTHPLACE IN THE
LAKE REGION



DOVE COTTAGE
At Town End, Grasmere.



WORDSWORTH'S MOTHER
By Margaret Gillies.



GRASMERE CHURCH

former class fall many of his shorter pieces, in which lofty thought and deep feeling are fused in an art of exquisite simplicity and purity. "The Prelude" and "The Excursion" contain passages of great beauty; but they are valuable chiefly to students. In the ten years which followed the publication of the "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798 he wrote many poems which are for all people and for all time. Such poetry as "Lucy," "To a Highland Girl," "The Solitary Reaper," "To a Cuckoo," "I Wandered Lonely," "She Was a Phantom of Delight," "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shade," ought to be planted in the minds of children as refuges from the commonplace, and as a protection from all that is cheap and inferior in life and art. In the "Ode to Duty," that on "Intimations of Immortality," in many stanzas from the long poems, and in a group of sonnets, Nature and Life are interpreted in an art which is both commanding and beautiful.



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

At his
best, in
depth

of thought, loyalty to truth, spiritual insight, purity of feeling, and that simplicity which is the last achievement of art, Wordsworth belongs among the half-dozen great poets of England.

It is too soon to assign their permanent places to Tennyson and Browning; but there is little doubt of their survival among the singers whom the world will not forget. Both were fortunately born and well educated, though in different ways; both were happily situated in life; both had ample time in which to give full and rounded expression to their genius. Fame did not come early to either; but it discovered Tennyson in middle life, and for three

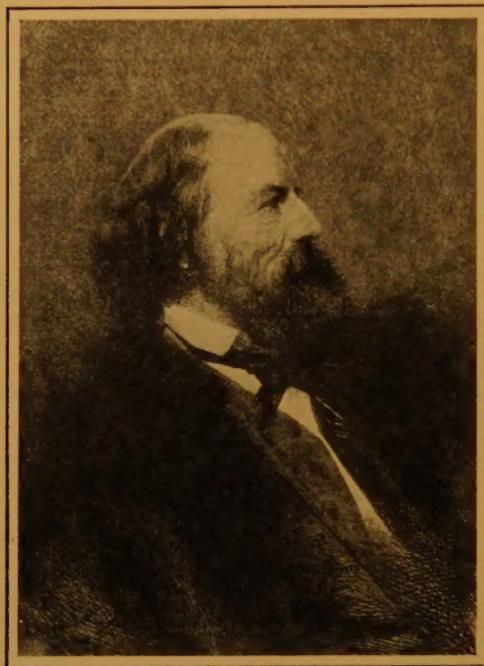


RYDAL MOUNT
Wordsworth's home.



ALFOXDEN HOUSE
Wordsworth's temporary home as it is now.

FAMOUS ENGLISH POETS



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
From the etching by Rajon.



TENNYSON'S BEAUTIFUL HOME
Aldworth, at Haslemere, Surrey, England.

or four decades it invested him with immense authority. Both were thinkers and students as well as singers, and both had ample intellectual resources. Tennyson was the finer artist; he was, indeed, one of the most perfect artists in the history of poetry. He had command of both harmony and melody; in other words, he could build a poem on strong constructive lines, and he could make it exquisitely musical. He mastered the resources of words; he knew how to use consonants and vowels so as to make his lines sing in the ear; he understood what can be done with assonance (resemblance in sound), repetition, alliteration. He

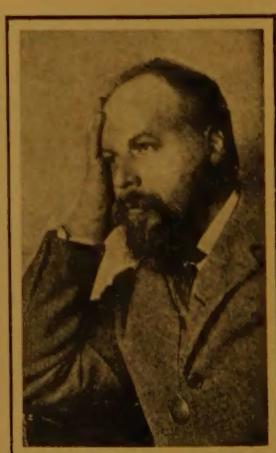
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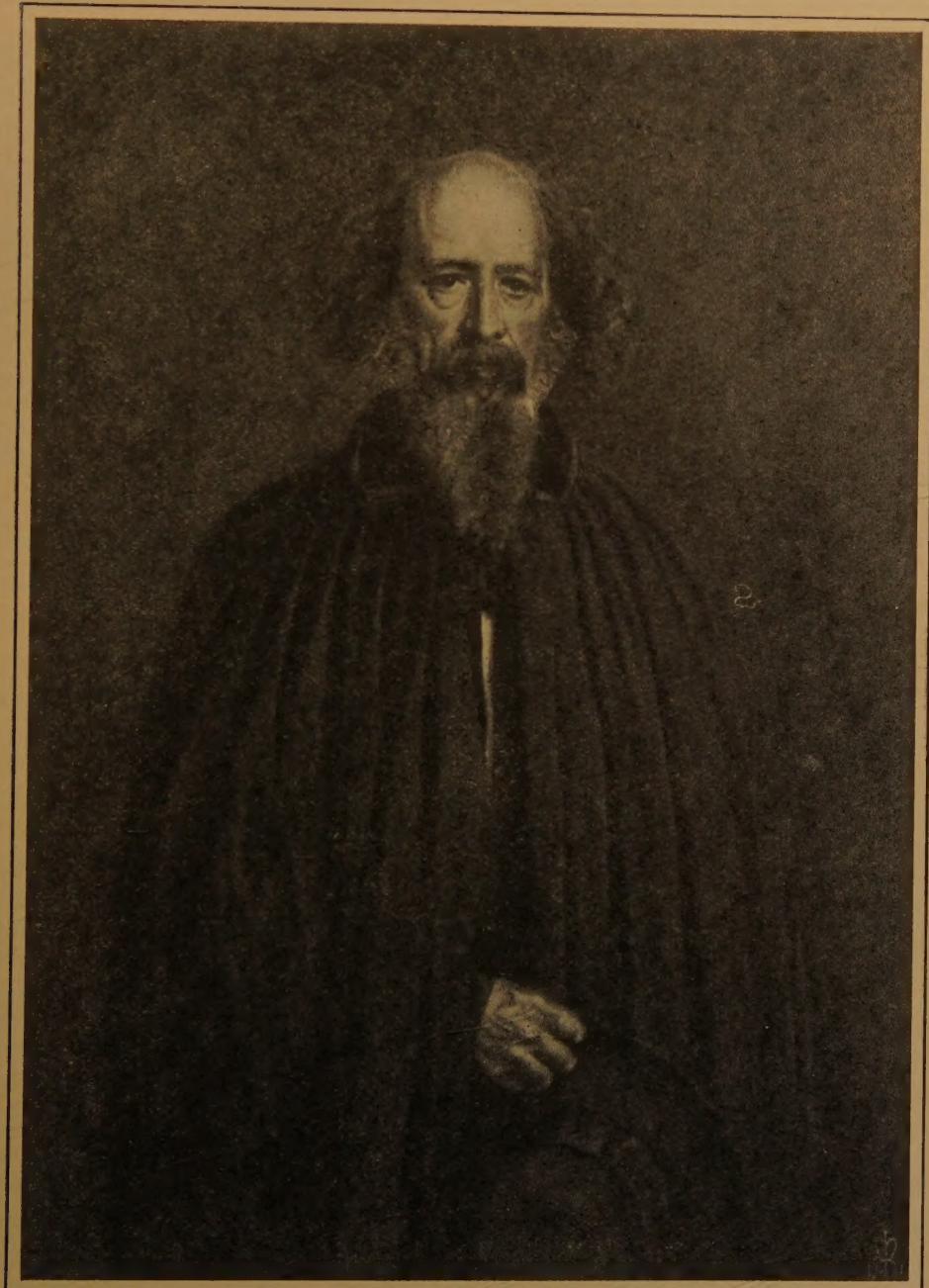
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
Photographed by Mrs. H. H. Cameron.



LADY TENNYSON
From painting by G. F. Watts.



HALLAM, LORD TENNYSON
The son of the poet.



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From a mezzotint by T. A. Barlow, after the painting by Sir John E. Millais, made in 1881.

was an expert workman; but never a mechanic alone. The stream of thought was not locked in poetic forms: it flowed freely through them. His art is so perfect that it conceals itself. He was not only a poet of exquisite skill, but he was a vigorous and independent thinker. The future historian of the intellectual and spiritual history of the nineteenth century will find "In Memoriam" what is called "an original authority" of far greater value than the formal records of the time. Some of the early short poems which captivated young readers in the '30's and '40's of the last century seem somewhat thin and artificial today; but the great mass of Tennyson's poetry has substance as well as quality, and such poems as

"Ulysses," "Sir Galahad," the "Two Voices," have a noble reach of thought as well as a compelling music; while the magic which lives in "Break, Break, Break," the songs from "The Princess," "Crossing the Bar," does not lose its spell. In power of thought, in deep religious feeling unbound by dogmatism, in faith in ordered liberty, in love of home, and in passion for beauty, Tennyson is the central figure of the Victorian Age.

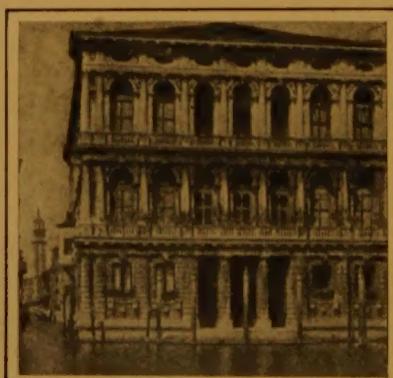
Browning is not so broadly representative of the movement of the age.

He gave dramatic expression to one aspect of its experience; but that aspect was of thrilling interest. Tennyson did not miss the significance of individual impulse; but he saw men in ordered ranks, in social relations. He felt and expressed the collective experience of his age. Browning felt and expressed the experience of individual souls, of "Paracelsus,"



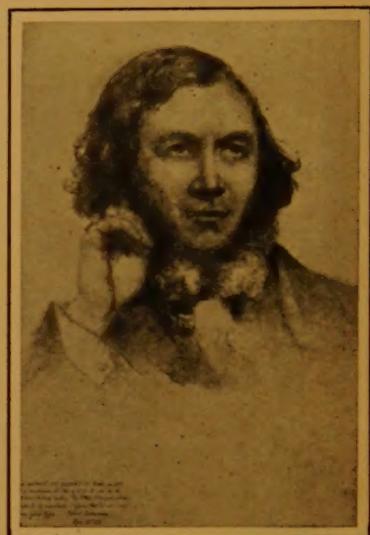
BROWNING'S HOME,
1887-9

De Vere Gardens, Ken-
sington, London, Eng-
land.



THE PALACE IN VENICE WHERE
BROWNING DIED

It was in this house, surrounded by all the
beauties of Venice, that the poet breathed
his last on December 12, 1889.



ROBERT BROWNING

From a portrait painted at Rome in
1859 by Field Talfourd.



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
From a portrait painted at Rome in
1859 by Field Talfourd.

arate the experiments in psychology from the achievements in art, and there will remain a body of poetry which appeals powerfully to men and women of intellectual interests and habits; a poetry notable for its reading of the secrets of individuality, its splendid optimism based on faith in the individual soul and in the purpose and power behind the universe, in the sense of freedom to take and use life daringly, in the impulse to action and spiritual venture, for its bold imagery and strong phrasing. Such poems as "Prospice," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," are not only impressive poetry, but have the note of the bugle in them.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING.—"Life of Wordsworth," Professor Knight; "Wordsworth," F. W. H. Myers (English Men of Letters Series); "Life of Shelley," Medwin; "Shelley," J. Addington Symonds (English Men of Letters Series); "Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats," Richard Monckton Milnes; "The Works of Lord Byron, with His Letters and Journals and His Life," Thomas Moore (17 volumes); "The Real Lord Byron," J. C. Jeafferson (2 volumes); "The Life and Letters of Browning," Mrs. Sutherland Orr; "Browning," G. K. Chesterton (English Men of Letters Series); "Alfred, Lord Tennyson: a Memoir," Hallam, Second Baron Tennyson; "The Life of Lord Tennyson," G. C. Benson.

"Luria." He is the interpreter of exceptional experiences and natures, of "Abt Vogler," Andrea del Sarto, the Renaissance Bishop.

He knew secrets of great and mean souls, of Pompilia and the Pope, of "Half Rome" and Caponsacchi (kah"-pahn-sock'-kee), in "The Ring and the Book," of "The Patriot," and of the husband of "The Last Duchess." He was a psychologist of penetrating intelligence, and his passion for analysis and dealing with problems sometimes ran away with him, to use a colloquialism; hence the perplexities which beset the student of some of his work and the organization of clubs to interpret him.

Browning was often a very effective artist; but he was often very indifferent to form, and there are long productions of his which are intensely interesting but are not in any proper sense poetry. Time will sep-



MRS. BROWNING'S TOMB
IN FLORENCE, ITALY

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was herself a poet of exceptional genius; she was born in 1806, married to Robert Browning in 1846, and died in 1861.

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Editorial

Some of the numbers of The Mentor have been used as the subject matter for reading clubs. That is a use of The Mentor that we most heartily welcome. We have information from one reader that the number of The Mentor on "Spain and Gibraltar" is to be used at the next meeting of a literary club in the home of the writer. This number is to be read in conjunction with a study of Washington Irving's books on Spain—"The Alhambra" and "The Conquest of Granada." Another club has used the article on "Dutch Masterpieces" as the core of its evening's study, and we have it from a reader that he knows that number of The Mentor "almost by heart." No better thing could be said of The Mentor than that it is worth knowing by heart. It means that The Mentor has become to some readers at least a fund of important information—a fund that they can literally absorb and make their own.

* * *

The New York Sun called attention editorially, a short time ago, to the yearly report of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, in which he deplores "too much slovenly reading matter" as an obstacle to education, "the substitution of quantity for quality," and recalls the fact that the great lawyers of the Colonial period and the makers of the Constitution had few, but the fittest, books; knew well a few first rate books.

"One reason, aside from insufficient or incompetent instruction in the schools, for the so often complained of illiteracy, so to speak, of students, is probably to be found in the mass of stories which the Carnegie and other libraries feed to them, and which they skim through at the double quick, getting no permanent impression. Their great-grandfathers read over and over and assimilated a handful of books. The little dingy or tattered home collection was often their school, college and university.

* * *

"Let us read over again Nicolay and Hay's description of Abraham Lincoln's boyhood studies: 'His reading was naturally limited by his opportunities, for books were among the rarest of luxuries in that region and time. But he read everything he could lay his hands upon, and he was certainly fortunate in the few books of which he became the possessor. It would hardly be possible to select a better handful of classics for a youth in his circumstances than the few volumes he turned with a nightly and daily hand—the Bible, "Æsop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Pilgrim's Progress," a history of the United States, and Weems' "Life of Washington." These were the best, and these he read over and over till he knew them almost by heart.'

* * *

"Almost by heart!" Fortunate is he who has lived with a few books. In a world of volumes swollen to intolerable dimensions there are still but a few real books. They are those we make our own; that shape the mind, store the memory, are the foundation and discipline of our intellectual life.

* * *

The purpose of The Mentor is to give the gist of knowledge to be found in the world's best books, and to give that knowledge in a form that is easy to retain. A number of Mentors thoroughly absorbed—as we might say, "learned by heart"—what a mental equipment it would mean! And the practical side, too, should be considered. Most people haven't time to read even the world's best books. The Mentor can be read in a few minutes.



GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Famous English Poets

LORD BYRON

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course



AWOKE one morning and found myself famous," said the great poet Byron. This was almost the very truth. A single poem, a long one indeed, "Childe Harold," made him the most talked of man of his time. His fame grew in a night. And yet he is said to have been prouder of being a descendant of those Byrons who came into England with William the Conqueror than of having been the author of "Childe Harold."

The Byrons were an ancient and honorable family, numbering among them many famous soldiers and landowners. George Noel Gordon Byron, the poet, was born on January 22, 1788. His father was Captain John Byron, a profligate and spendthrift. His mother was Catherine Gordon, the second wife of "Mad Jack Byron," as the poet's father was called. His parents soon separated, Mrs. Byron taking her son with her.

In 1798 the poet's great-uncle died, and George became Lord Byron at the age of ten. He and his mother were now assured of a comfortable income, and he was sent to Harrow School, where, in spite of his lameness, which he had suffered from birth, he became a good athlete.

At the age of sixteen Byron fell desperately in love with Mary Chaworth, a distant relative, two years older than himself. Her indifference broke the poet's heart—for the time being.

He entered Cambridge in 1805, and while there wasted most of his time. He left college with the degree of Master of Arts at the age of twenty. In 1807 he published his first volume of poetry, "Hours of Idleness." The Edinburgh Review ridiculed these in a satirical criticism. This provoked from Byron a brilliant retort in the form of a poem called "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

In 1809 he was off for Europe. In "Childe Harold" he has told his thoughts and experiences during these wanderings. The first two cantos of this poem appeared in 1812, and their success was instantaneous.

The life of a personality like Byron is so full of incident, so colored with romance and adventure, that to tell it in detail requires a great deal of space. Everything that he did was interesting; everywhere he went he left the impress of his genius. Women loved him, and men imitated him. Byron was the fashion, and the poet was renowned the world over.

He married Anne Isabella Milbanke in 1815. A daughter, Augusta Ada, afterward Countess of Lovelace, was born to them. In 1816 Lady Byron left her husband, giving as the reason her belief that he was insane.

The following spring Byron left England, and after traveling about for sometime met the poet Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin in Switzerland. From there he went to Italy, where he lived for a number of years. When there he wrote many of his greatest poems.

About this time Greece was struggling to throw off the rule of Turkey. Byron, a great believer in liberty of every sort, gave freely of his sympathy and money to the cause. In 1823 he fitted up an expedition and sailed to the aid of the Greeks; but before he could get into active service he was taken fatally ill, and died at Missolonghi on April 19, 1824. His last words were of Greece, the country he had come to help to freedom: "I have given her my time, my means, my health—and now I give her my life! What could I do more?"

Byron's body was carried back to England; but the British authorities would not allow him to be buried in Westminster Abbey. There is neither bust nor statue of him in Poets' Corner. His remains were finally laid beneath the chancel of the village church of Hucknall Torkard.



JOHN KEATS



Famous English Poets



JOHN KEATS

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course



O one man ever published a worse first volume nor a better last volume of poetry than did John Keats. And no poet was so severely criticized at the beginning nor more highly praised at the end of his life. Yet between the appearance of his first work and the publication of his last volume there was a space of but three years.

Keats' origin was humble; but not so vulgar as most people think. He was born on October 29, 1795, and was the eldest son of Thomas Keats, head hostler at the Swan and Hoop livery stables in London. But in spite of these commonplace early associations his parents were able to send John to a private school at Enfield. Thomas Keats was killed by a fall from his horse in 1804, and Mrs. Keats married another stable keeper. This marriage was an unhappy one, and the couple soon separated.

At school Keats was distinguished for his quick temper, a love of fighting, and a great appetite for reading. In 1810, when his mother died, he left school with the intention of becoming a doctor. He was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon in Edmonton; but he had a quarrel with him, and went to London in 1814 to study at Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals.

Even in London, Keats could not concentrate his whole attention on the study of medicine. He read a great deal of poetry, especially Spenser. In 1816 he met Leigh Hunt, who introduced him to the poet Shelley. Already he had begun to write verse, and these friends stimulated his poetic gift, until in the winter of 1816-17 he definitely decided to give up the study of medicine and write for a living.

His first volume of "Poems by John Keats" appeared in the spring of 1817. This book was dedicated to Leigh Hunt. The next year he published "Endymion: A Poetic Romance." This volume was harshly treated by the famous critic Gifford in the Quarterly Review. Whether or not the poem deserved such severity, the language of the reviewer cut Keats to the quick. He also bitterly resented the attacks made upon him in Blackwood's Magazine.

With his friend Armitage Brown he next started on a walking tour of Scotland; but on account of the bad state of his health was forced to give this up. His brother Thomas Keats died of consumption at the beginning of December, 1818, and the poet went to live with Brown. When there he fell passionately in love with Fanny Brawne, a girl of seventeen, who lived nearby. It was at this time that he wrote his greatest poems; although his health was very poor.

Early in 1820 Keats realized that he had consumption; but he did not give up. In July he published his third and last volume of poetry, "Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems." In September, 1820, he started for Naples in an attempt to cure himself; but it was in vain, for on the following February 23 he died in Rome. He was buried in the old Protestant cemetery near the pyramid of Cestius. He requested that on his gravestone should be carved this inscription, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

It was formerly believed that the attacks of hostile reviewers were the cause of Keats' death; but this theory has long since been disproved. Although the sensitive poet felt these bitter attacks keenly, his was not a spirit to sink beneath them.



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



Famous English Poets



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born near Horsham, in the county of Sussex, England, on August 4, 1792. He was the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley.

At the age of eleven he was sent to school at Eton. There he had a hard time. He resisted the "fagging" system,—a system under which the young boys must act as servants to the older ones,—and he would not work at his lessons. He was gentle natured and retiring; but when provoked he showed a very violent temper. So he was known as "Mad Shelley" by his schoolmates.

In 1810 Shelley entered Oxford. But he did not stay there long; for he and a friend, named Thomas Jefferson Hogg, became atheists, and Shelley wrote a little pamphlet on atheism, which he sent to the different heads of the colleges, asking them to notify him at once of their conversion to atheism. This they declined to do; but instead summoned both Shelley and Hogg and expelled them. Shelley and his friends complained at what they termed the injustice of the expulsion; but his father would have nothing to do with him. So Shelley went to London, where he wrote the poem "Queen Mab." This was not published until later.

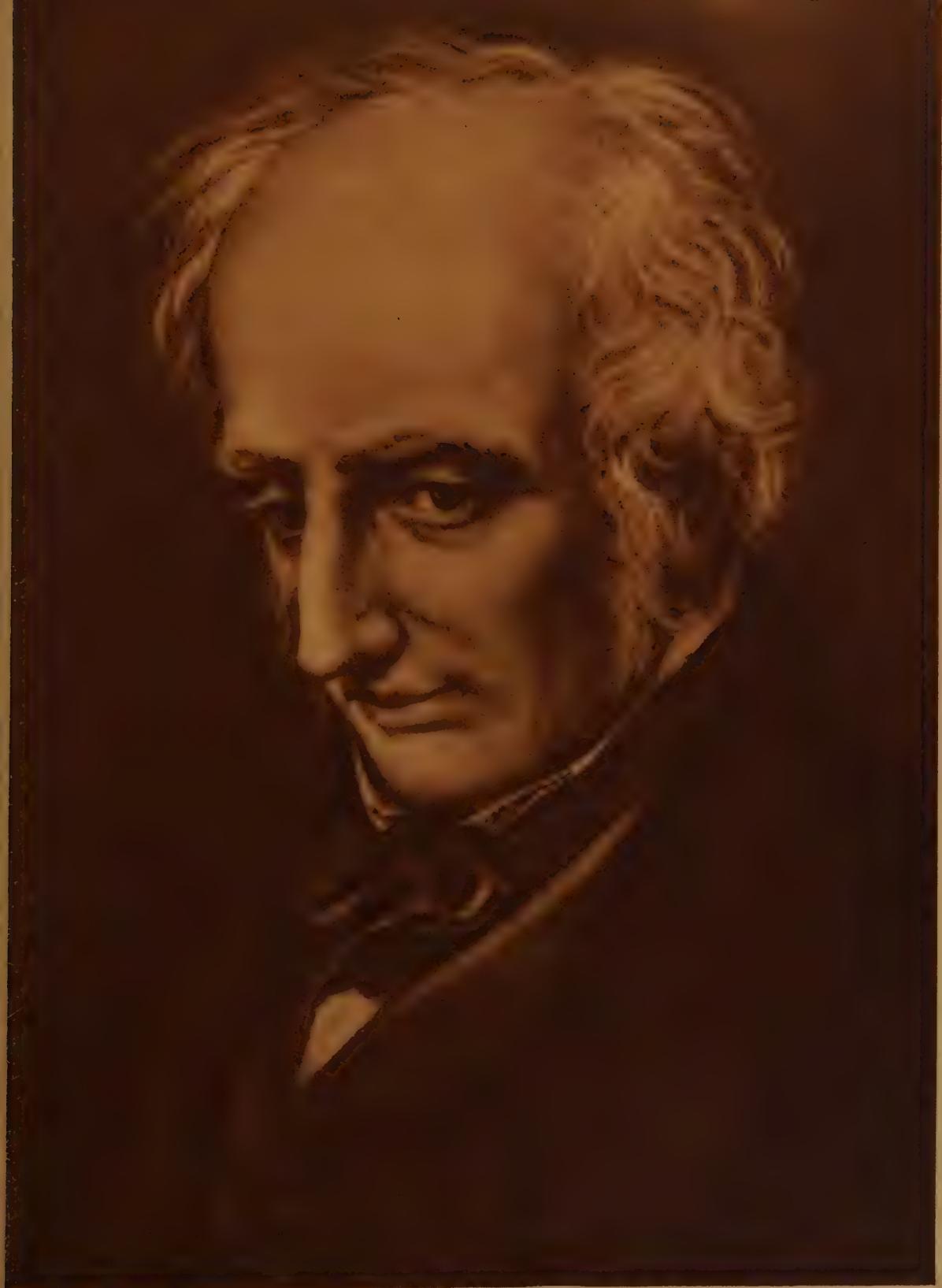
When he was in London his sisters sent him money by means of Harriet Westbrook, one of their friends. Shelley converted her to atheism, and married her in August, 1811, because she did not wish to go back to school. This marriage turned out to be very unhappy, and they separated by mutual consent in 1813.

The next year Shelley, accompanied by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the daughter of William Godwin, the speculative philosopher, and Claire Clairmont, a friend of the poet Lord Byron, visited Europe. In 1815 Shelley's grandfather died, and the poet was assured of a regular income of \$5,000 a year. In 1816 he visited Europe again, and in November of the same year his wife Harriet drowned herself. Shelley's two children were committed to the care of their grandfather Westbrook.

Shelley married Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and in 1818 they left England, never to return, going to Italy, where he wrote many of his greatest poems.

His second wife was a talented woman and a writer of ability. Under the name of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley she wrote that famous grawsome tale, "Frankenstein."

In July, 1822, Shelley set sail in a small boat to return to his summer home at Spezia. The boat was overtaken by a sudden squall and disappeared. Two weeks later Shelley's body was washed ashore with a copy of Keats' poems open in one of his pockets. The Tuscan quarantine regulations at that time required that whatever came ashore from the sea should be burned. Accordingly Shelley's body was placed on a pyre and reduced to ashes in the presence of Leigh Hunt, E. J. Trelawney, and Lord Byron. His ashes were collected and buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the grave of his friend Keats.



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



Famous English Poets



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course



T the age of twenty-one William Wordsworth was so undecided as to what he wanted to do for a living that his relatives believed he would turn out to be a good-for-nothing. At the age of thirty-five he had finished a tremendous poem in fourteen books, which he had begun because he was not ready at the time to take up anything more difficult!

Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, England, on April 7, 1770, the son of John Wordsworth, a lawyer. When he was only fifteen he wrote as a school task an account in poetry of his summer vacation. He entered Cambridge at the age of seventeen; but did not get along well there because he did not like his studies nor the discipline of the college.

In those days, when there was no railroads or trolley lines, it was the custom for young Englishmen who could afford it to take walking trips through Europe during their vacations from college. In the summer of 1790 Wordsworth made a tour through France and among the Alps, and was much affected by the beauties of nature he saw, particularly at Lake Como. He graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1791, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

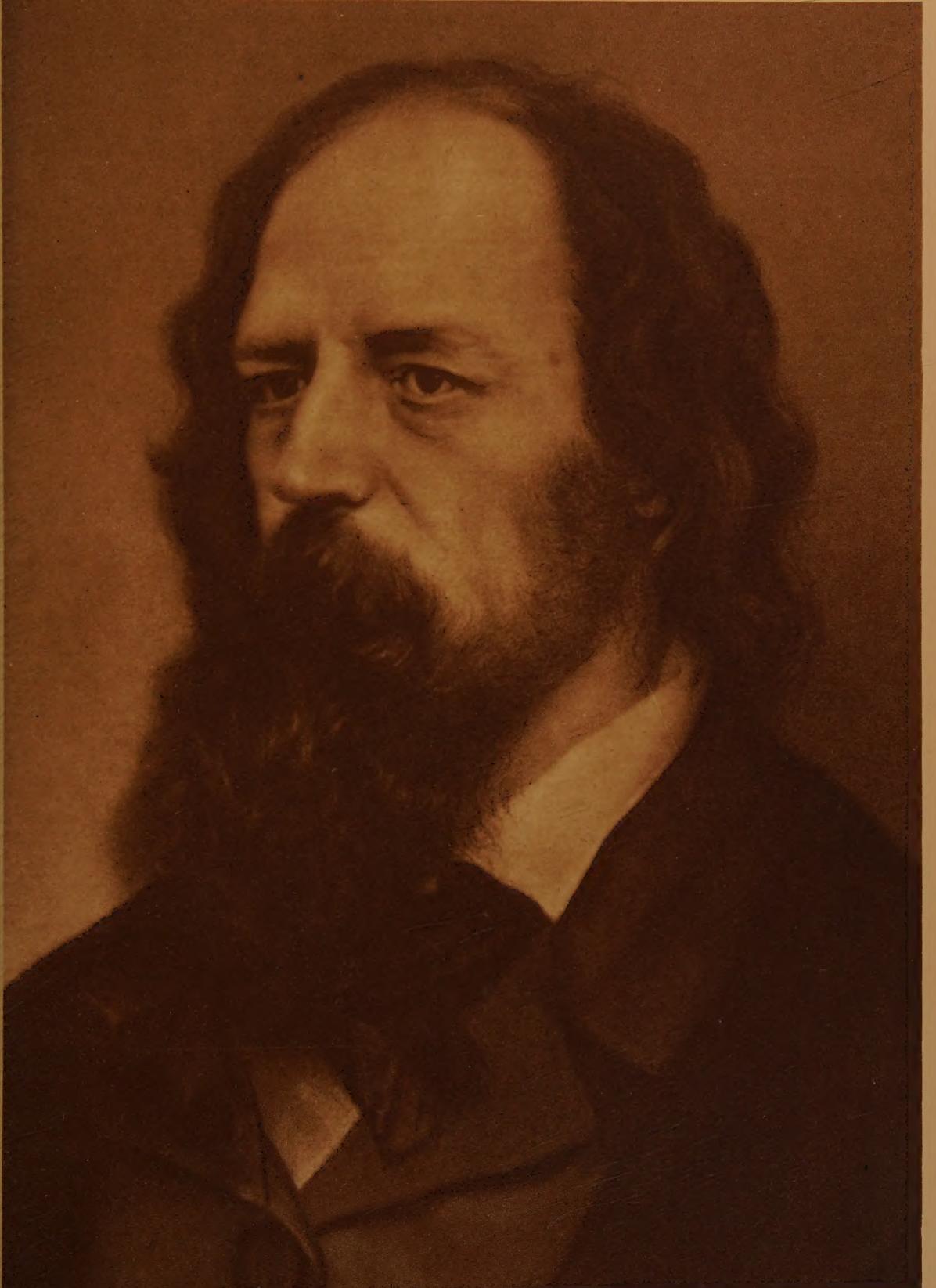
The French Revolution came along about this time, and, together with most of the progressive young men of the day, Wordsworth hailed it with enthusiasm. But later the horrors of the Revolution disgusted him; although he always remained a Republican in principle.

Wordsworth's friends urged him to enter the ministry, and he himself thought a little of becoming a lawyer; but he finally decided to write for a living. And a poor living it was at first! Sometimes he had hardly enough to eat. He published his first poems in 1793,—“An Evening Walk, Addressed to a Young Lady,” and “Descriptive Sketches Taken During a Pedestrian Tour Among the Alps.”

Two years later his poverty was lightened by a legacy of \$4,500 left him by a friend, and his sister Dorothy went to keep house for him. She helped him in many ways, and cheered his spirits. In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, and about the same time inherited \$9,000 from his father. Three years later he finished that long poem in fourteen books, “The Prelude,” containing an account of the cultivation and development of his own mind. This was not published until after the poet's death.

Wordsworth continued to write many poems, most of which had to do with the beauties of nature. Nature in all her forms was his delight. He liked to walk by himself in the fields, and to talk with the poorer people, those nearest to the soil. He was simple, kindly, and much loved by those who knew him.

In 1843 Wordsworth succeeded Robert Southey as poet laureate of England, and was recognized as the greatest living English poet. He held this honor only seven years, as he died at Rydal Mount, his home in England, on April 23, 1850.



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON



Famous English Poets



ALFRED TENNYSON

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course



LFRED TENNYSON was born at Somersby in Lincolnshire, England, on August 6, 1809. His father was a rector, and the poet's boyhood was passed in an atmosphere of poetry and music. Even as a child he wrote verses, and some of these were published in 1827 in a volume, "Poems by Two Brothers," written by himself and his elder brother Charles.

He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1829, and in the same year won the chancellor's medal with a blank-verse poem called "Timbuctoo." His closest friend at college was Arthur Henry Hallam, a brilliant young man who belonged to The Apostles, a society of which Tennyson was also a member.

"Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," was published in 1830; but the following year, soon after the death of his father, the poet left Cambridge without taking his degree. He then decided to devote his life to writing poetry. A small volume of poems published in 1832 proved that he had chosen well; for it contained some of his best work.

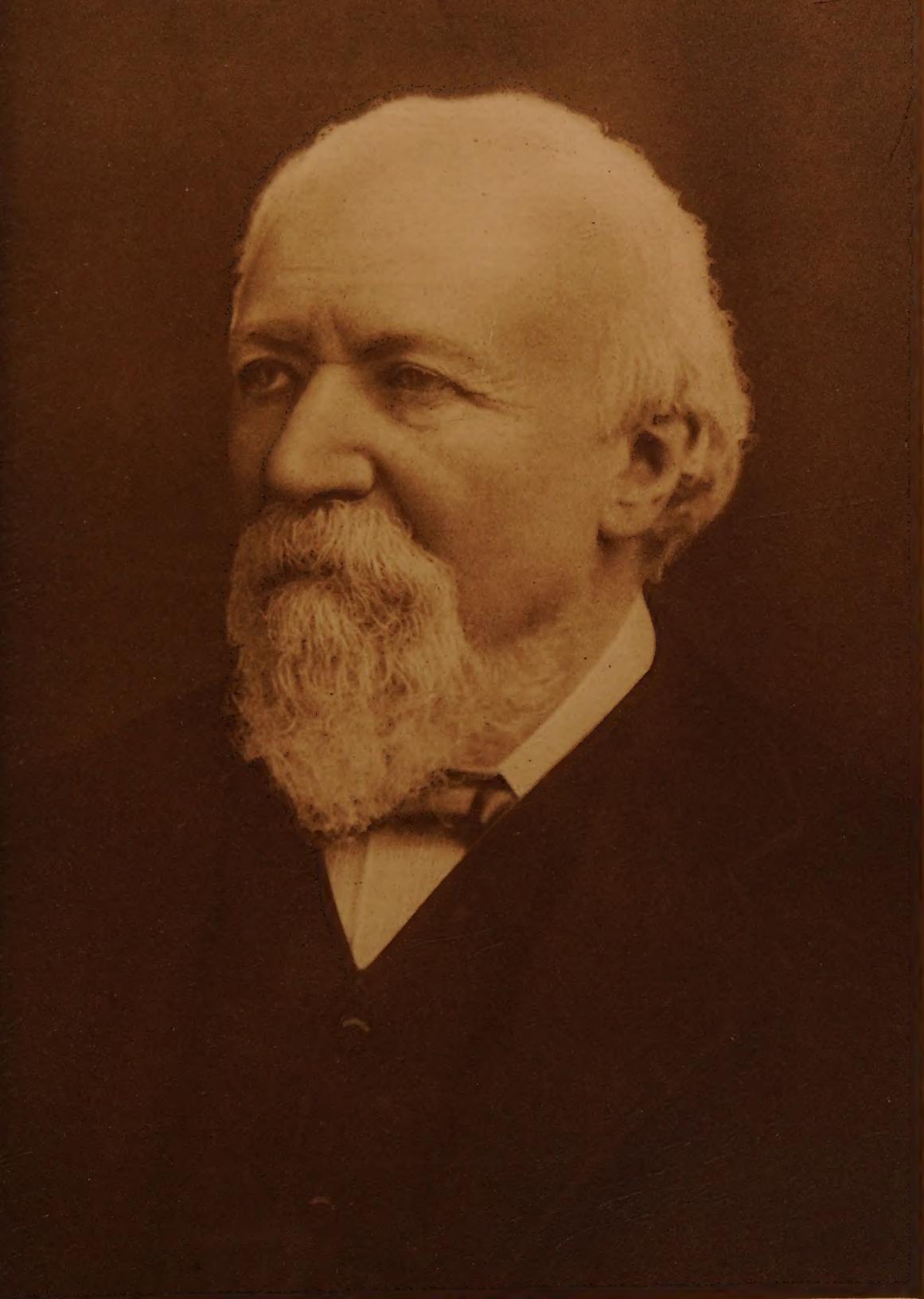
But now for ten years the poet kept silence. He did not publish another line of poetry until 1842. The reason for this was the death of his friend Arthur Hallam. Hallam was the closest intimate of Tennyson, and when he died suddenly at Vienna in 1833 the poet received a blow from which he never fully recovered. But this great loss was poetically the making of Tennyson. The volume of 1842 contained some of his greatest poems, among them being "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," and "Break, Break, Break."

Five years after this appeared "The Princess," a long poem treating of the "woman question" in a half-humorous way. It is a poem of great beauty.

Then in 1850 came the elegy on the death of Hallam, "In Memoriam." This had been long expected, and it proved to be one of the greatest poems of the century.

In the same year Tennyson married Emily Sellwood, and was appointed poet laureate to succeed Wordsworth. His first official poem in this position was the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" in 1852. Two years later "The Charge of the Light Brigade" electrified the world. "Maud" appeared in 1855, and then four years later began the publication of the famous "Idylls of the King," poems in blank verse telling of King Arthur and his court. From that time on Tennyson wrote many poems and dramas.

In 1884 he was made Lord Tennyson, first Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. He took the title from his two country houses in Sussex and on the Isle of Wight. On October 6, 1892, Tennyson died at Aldworth "with the moonlight falling on closed eyes and voiceless lips."



ROBERT BROWNING



Famous English Poets



ROBERT BROWNING

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course

"God's in his heaven:
All's right with the world."



O Pippa sings in "Pippa Passes." And that was the philosophy of the great poet who wrote the lines. Robert Browning was an optimist. He believed that the world would come out all right in the end, that good would win.

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, at Camberwell, near London. His father, who worked in the Bank of England, was also named Robert Browning. The Brownings were of sturdy stock; but the poet's mother was delicate. At the age of twelve he had written a volume of poems called "Incondita"; but his parents could find no one who would publish it.

Browning's early education was rather scant; but he made up for this by a great deal of miscellaneous reading in his father's library. He had a chance to become a clerk in the Bank of England; but he refused it, and decided to write poetry for a living. Strange to say, his parents encouraged him in this. He published his first poem, "Pauline," in 1833. Then followed "Paracelsus" in 1835, and "Sordello" in 1840.

Browning was by this time becoming well known, and his poetry was admired. He had always liked the theater, and now he began to write drama. In May, 1837, his first play, "Strafford," was produced in Covent Garden. He followed this with several others, none of which had great financial success.

In 1844 Elizabeth Barrett, a poetess whose genius was then being recognized, published a volume of poems containing "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," with a striking phrase about Browning's poems. This pleased the poet greatly, and he was encouraged by her cousin, John Kenyon, to write to her. Finally she permitted him to visit her, and they fell in love with each other. Elizabeth Barrett was six years older than Browning, and was a chronic nervous invalid; but in September, 1846, was secretly married to him in spite of the opposition of her father, who objected on principle to the marriage of his children. Theirs was one of the greatest love stories in all history. They were both poets of the highest genius, and they loved each other devotedly. When his wife died at Florence, Italy, on June 30, 1861, Browning was crushed by the blow.

But he bore it like the great man that he was. He decided to return to England to superintend the education of his son, Robert Wiedeman Browning. There he resumed his writing, and published many poems, including "The Ring and the Book," which is regarded by some as his masterpiece. It is an immense poem in twelve books, in which the story of a murder is told many times over by the various characters concerned. It is a unique and powerful poem.

In his later years Browning returned to Italy; but he never revisited Florence after his wife's death there. He continued writing almost to the very end of his long life. He composed very slowly, considering twenty-five or thirty lines a good day's work.

The real greatness of the poet was appreciated toward the end of his life, and many honors were showered upon him. In 1889 he went to Venice with his son. Here he caught a heavy cold, and this, combined with the poor state of his health, was too much for the old poet. He died on December 12, 1889, and was buried in Westminster Abbey on December 31.